HPV Vaccine

This sheet is about exposure to the HPV vaccine in pregnancy and while breastfeeding. This information should not take the place of medical care and advice from your healthcare providers.

What is HPV?

Human papillomavirus (HPV) is the most common infection that is transmitted by skin-to-skin sexual contact. HPV is not just one virus. There are over 200 different kinds of HPV.

It is thought that at least half of all people who are sexually active have been exposed to at least one type of HPV. Most people will have no symptoms of HPV infection and no related health problems.

However, some types of HPV do cause health problems. Some types of HPV can cause genital warts. Others can cause cancer of the cervix and vagina, cancer of the penis, and cancer of the mouth/throat and anus.

What is the HPV vaccine?

The HPV vaccine provides protection against infection with some types of HPV that cause cancer and some types of HPV that cause genital warts. The HPV Gardasil®9 vaccine is approved for persons between the ages of 9 and 45 years of age. The vaccine provides the most protection when given before becoming sexually active. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that if you identify a pregnancy before finishing your full HPV vaccine series to wait until after pregnancy to finish the vaccine series.

Gardasil®9, which protects against 9 of the HPV virus types, is the name of the HPV vaccine currently available in the United States. Gardasil®9 does not contain a live virus. This means it is noninfectious and cannot give a person HPV.

Noninfectious vaccines in general are considered a low concern for pregnancy. MothertoBaby has a general fact sheet on vaccines available at https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/vaccines-pregnancy/.

Could getting HPV vaccine make it harder to become pregnant?

There is no evidence that getting the HPV vaccine would make it harder to become pregnant in the future.

I just got the HPV vaccine, how long should I wait until I get pregnant?

Since the HPV vaccine is noninfectious, there is no specific recommended waiting period before trying to get pregnant. Pregnancy testing is not needed to get the HPV vaccine. The CDC recommends that if you identify a pregnancy before finishing the full HPV vaccine series to wait until after pregnancy to finish the vaccine series.

Does getting the HPV vaccine increase the chance for miscarriage?

Miscarriage can occur in any pregnancy. Based on the available data, the HPV vaccine is not expected to increase the chance for miscarriage.

Does getting the HPV vaccine increase the chance of birth defects?

Every pregnancy starts out with a 3-5% chance of having a birth defect. This is called the background risk. In over 4,000 pregnancies in which an HPV vaccine was given shortly before or during pregnancy, no increase chance of birth defects was found.

Could getting the HPV vaccine cause other pregnancy complications?

While the current recommendation is to wait until after pregnancy to complete any remaining HPV doses needed, available studies in which any HPV vaccine was given shortly before or during pregnancy, no increase in other pregnancy complications was reported.

Does getting the HPV vaccine in pregnancy cause long-term problems in behavior or learning for the baby?

Studies have not been done to see if the HPV vaccine can cause long-term problems. Based on what is known about
noninfectious vaccines, getting the HPV vaccine is not expected to cause long-term problems for the baby.

Can I receive the HPV vaccine while breastfeeding?

The CDC notes that the HPV vaccine can be given to a person who is breastfeeding. Talk to your healthcare provider about all of your breastfeeding questions.

If a male gets the HPV vaccine, could it affect fertility (ability to get partner pregnant) or increase the chance of birth defects?

There is no evidence that vaccines will affect sperm. In general, exposures that fathers or sperm donors have are unlikely to increase the risks to a pregnancy. For more information, please see the MotherToBaby fact sheet Paternal Exposures at https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/paternal-exposures-pregnancy/.

Please click here to view references.